

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET PUTS INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMERICA AT GREAT RISK

(Mr. FLEMING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, I received a letter from the President of the Louisiana Oil and Gas Association expressing grave concern over the administration's budget proposal we were sent last week. Our Nation's oil and gas industry is not made up of the five or so Big Oil companies; instead, it is several thousand independent oil and natural gas producers. It is these companies that drill and produce the vast majority of oil and natural gas produced here in the United States.

The administration's budget proposals will strip the economic incentives that provide the investment capital that is needed to explore and produce oil and gas for our country. Without these incentives, exploration and production of oil and natural gas will drastically decline, trillions of dollars will be lost, tens of thousands of jobs will be lost, and our Nation's energy security will be severely threatened.

In my home State of Louisiana, 25 percent of the Nation's energy is produced. We are the heartbeat of our Nation's energy infrastructure. Simply put, the administration's budget proposals will put that infrastructure and our country at great risk and drive up home utilities and gas at the pump.

□ 1300

VOTE "YES" ON HELPING FAMILIES SAVE THEIR HOMES ACT

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, there is unusually broad agreement on the fact that to stop the downward spiral of this economy, we have to act on several fronts at once in a forceful and coordinated manner.

We have addressed the need for job creation and tax relief with the economic recovery bill. We are addressing the banking crisis and credit freeze with the second round of TARP funds and the launching of the TALF program. Now we have the chance to take action on a critically important front, stabilizing housing prices. All across the country, neighborhoods are struggling as each foreclosed home reduces the value of nearby properties.

The Helping Families Save Their Homes Act will give more tools to homeowners to stay in their homes and allow judicial modifications of home mortgages. It helps families facing foreclosure stay in their homes, thus stabilizing lives, home prices, neighborhoods and restoring confidence in the economy.

I am confident that a "yes" vote on this bill is in the best interests of our American economy.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, later this week President Obama is expected to sign the omnibus spending bill into law. That bill contains nearly 9,000 earmarks. Now, this is unfortunate. It sends a signal that we have ushered in a new era of absolutely the same, business as usual.

I would encourage the President, if he is going to sign the omnibus bill, to at least announce a change moving forward. He could announce, for example, that he will not sign legislation in the future that contains congressionally directed no-bid contracts to private companies.

He should encourage the Congress to end the appearance of pay-to-play when no-bid contracts are given to those who give us campaign contributions. Giving no-bid contracts to our campaign donors should be beneath the dignity of this House. Now our leadership, both on the Republican and the Democratic side, has not recognized this yet, but I hope that the President does.

HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS

(Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, this week the House is scheduled to take up H.R. 1106, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009. While much of the controversy over this bill is focused on the title I provisions, the provisions in title II will provide safe harbor for lenders willing to modify mortgages and improve the HOPE for Homeowners program.

Allow me to dispel a few of the myths surrounding this legislation.

Myth: The bill only benefits a small number of homeowners.

Fact: This bill will actually help all homeowners by protecting their neighborhoods from the negative effects of foreclosure. Every foreclosure brings down the value of nearby homes, further eroding the equity of homeowners who are up to date on their mortgages. Millions of middle class families are just one sickness or one layoff away from a possible foreclosure.

Myth: The bill rewards bad behavior.

Fact: This bill requires homeowners to negotiate with their lenders in good faith before they can even consider applying for judicial modification of their home loan through bankruptcy.

Myth: The bill is a dramatic change in the Bankruptcy Code.

Fact: This bill equalizes the rules by treating residential bankruptcies the same as corporate, farm and vacation home bankruptcies.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I'd like to remind my colleagues that while much of the controversy over this bill has fo-

cused on the Title I provisions, the provisions in Title II will help thousands of homeowners and enjoy broad support. Providing safe harbor for lenders willing to modify mortgages and improving the HOPE for Homeowners program are much-needed reforms that will help stem the tide of foreclosures and protect our neighborhoods. I would like to take a few moments to dispel some of the myths surrounding the legislation that could also be referred to as the Neighborhood Protection Act.

Myth: This bill only benefits a small number of low income homeowners or homeowners who bought more house than they could afford.

Fact: H.R. 1106 will actually help all homeowners by protecting their neighborhoods from the negative effects of foreclosure. Every foreclosure in a neighborhood brings down the value of nearby homes, further eroding the equity of homeowners who are up to date on their mortgages. Furthermore, the foreclosure crisis has spread beyond victims of the subprime crisis or individuals who purchased more home than they could afford. As President Obama noted in his address to this body, millions of middle-class families are just one sickness or one layoff away from possible foreclosure. Without the ability to sell or refinance a home with a current value lower than the mortgage value, these families are out of options.

Myth: The bill rewards bad behavior.

Fact: H.R. 1106 requires homeowners to negotiate with their lenders in good faith before they can even consider applying for a judicial modification of their home loan through bankruptcy. And the bill prevents judges from modifying loans for homeowners who have the ability to make their payments or make other bad faith efforts to game the system. The specious argument that the bill rewards bad behavior is being promoted by the banks, who themselves were rewarded for their bad behavior by the previous Administration. After receiving hundreds of billions of dollars in taxpayer bailouts, the banks should be the last to complain. This bill is designed to help families who have worked hard and played by the rules, but are trapped by declining property values and escalating job losses.

Myth: The bill enables homeowners to avoid their financial responsibilities.

Fact: H.R. 1106 allows judges to modify a mortgage only in those cases where it is truly not affordable for the homeowner and even then judges can only reduce the mortgage to the fair market value of the property. Lenders are able to recoup the fair market value of the house, plus interest, which is much better than they usually secure in a foreclosure sale.

Myth: The bill is a dramatic change in the bankruptcy code.

Fact: H.R. 1106 equalizes bankruptcy rules by treating residential bankruptcies the same as corporate, farm, and vacation home bankruptcies. H.R. 1106 will give struggling families or individuals the same right to modify the loans on their primary homes as wealthy investors have to modify the loans on their second or third properties.

Myth: The bill will dramatically increase bankruptcies.

Fact: Bankruptcy proceedings are unpleasant and scar one's credit record for years. No one looks forward to bankruptcy. And this bill provides stringent conditions, with a series of interim steps and requirements, so bankruptcy

proceedings are only used as a last resort after exhausting all other options to save a home.

Myth: This bill is another bailout for the banks and will cost taxpayers tens of billions.

Fact: H.R. 1106 actually redirects existing TARP funds from the banks to homeowners. It also will make sure the TARP funds are spent on economic recovery and neighborhood stabilization rather than salted away in some bank vault or paid to bank shareholders as dividends. This bill does exactly what the American people have asked for; it helps homeowners rather than banks and big business.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1106 is not a perfect bill, but it is one more piece in the mosaic of positive efforts we are making to turn our economy around. It is good for homeowners. It is good for the future stability of our neighborhoods. It is good for our nation's economy.

That is why I ask my colleagues to join me later today in supporting H.R. 1106.

WHERE IS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ON SUDAN?

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudan's President Bashir, charging him with seven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is the first time the court has accused a sitting head of state of war crimes.

The world knows what's happening in Sudan and Darfur, and yet the Obama administration has failed to appoint a special envoy. I have asked him to appoint a former Senator, Bill Frist from Tennessee, who can start today. The tribunal spokesman said the crimes included, and I quote, "murdering, exterminating, raping, torturing and forcibly transferring large numbers of civilians and the pillaging of their property."

According to the U.N., an estimated 300,000 have been killed since the Darfur conflict began and 2.7 million displaced. And yet the Obama administration has failed to appoint a special envoy. As recently as just yesterday, the AP reported that in recent weeks 26,000 people have fled their homes in Darfur and flooded Zamzam refugee camps, already at 50,000.

I close by saying time is short. The killing and the devastation goes on. The administration must act. This cannot wait.

INNOVATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HALLMARK OF AMERICAN SUCCESS

(Mr. LUJÁN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. Speaker, innovation has always been a hallmark of American success. Innovation will transform the way we generate and store power

from renewable resources, use electricity more efficiently, and create a workforce for the 21st century.

President Obama's budget promotes the development of innovative clean energy technology, modernizes the electric grid, and provides the capital to double renewable energy generating capacity. With these investments we will change the way our country generates, uses and delivers energy. We will produce jobs throughout the United States and begin to end our dependence on foreign oil.

America's prosperity depends on bold action and investments in research and development, on our ability to adapt through innovation and on creating green jobs that will build a foundation for a clean energy economy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

RECOGNIZING BEVERLY ECKERT FOR 9/11 VICTIMS WORK

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 201) recognizing Beverly Eckert's service to the Nation and particularly to the survivors and families of the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 201

Whereas on the morning of September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked and destroyed four civilian aircraft, crashing two of them into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and a third into the Pentagon outside Washington, DC;

Whereas the passengers and crew aboard United Flight 93 acted heroically to prevent the terrorist hijackers from taking additional American lives, by crashing the plane in Shanksville, Pennsylvania and sacrificing their own lives instead;

Whereas thousands of innocent men, women, and children were brutally murdered in the attacks of September 11, 2001;

Whereas pursuant to Public Law 107-306, the 9/11 Commission was formed to ascertain, evaluate, and report on the evidence regarding the terrorist attacks;

Whereas the 9/11 Commission was also required in Public Law 107-306 to make a full and complete accounting of the circumstances surrounding the terrorist attacks, report on the United States' preparedness for, and immediate response to, terrorist attacks, and make findings, conclusions, and recommendations for corrective measures that could be taken to prevent, prepare, and respond to acts of terrorism;

Whereas the 9/11 Commission stated in its report that it "interviewed more than 1,200

individuals" to assist in making its recommendations;

Whereas one of the groups representing the victims, "Voices of September 11", testified before the 9/11 Commission;

Whereas Beverly Eckert was the widow of Mr. Sean Rooney, who died in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and following her husband's death, Beverly Eckert co-founded "Voices of September 11", an advocacy group for survivors and 9/11 families;

Whereas Beverly Eckert was instrumental in the development and growth of this important advocacy group, which now claims more than 5,500 members;

Whereas Beverly Eckert worked admirably with the 110th Congress and was a key proponent in the final passage of the "Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007" as the legislation to effectuate the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission to prevent, prepare, and respond to acts of terrorism; and

Whereas the United States will forever be grateful for the services of Beverly Eckert and mourn her loss: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) acknowledges Beverly Eckert's service to the Nation and particularly to the survivors and families of the September 11, 2001, attacks;

(2) recognizes Beverly Eckert's work to help bring about implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations to prepare, prevent, and respond to acts of terrorism; and

(3) extends its deepest condolences to the family of Beverly Eckert and the families of all those who lost their lives due to the crash of Continental Connection Flight 3407.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILL RAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H. Res. 201, which recognizes Beverly Eckert's service to the United States of America, particularly the survivors and the families of the attack on September 11, 2001.

Ms. Eckert was the widow of Mr. Sean Rooney, who was killed in the World Trade Center on September 11. For many, the devastating loss of a partner, of a husband, would lead to a state of grief, anger, fear, paralysis.

But Beverly Eckert turned the September 11 attacks into a clarion call of government accountability and transparency, Mr. Speaker. When there were questions about what led to the attacks, Beverly Eckert demanded answers.